

## USACE forwards Hopper Dredges Report to Congress

The United States Army Corps of Engineers has forwarded to Congress a report detailing its recommendations for the future operation and minimum composition of the Corps' hopper dredge fleet.

USACE currently owns and operates four hopper dredges. The *Essayons*, *Wheeler* and *Yaquina* were launched in the early 1980s, and the *McFarland* was launched in 1966. Portland District operates the *Essayons* (large hopper class) and *Yaquina* (small hopper class), New Orleans District operates the *Wheeler* (large hopper class), and Philadelphia District operates the *McFarland* (medium hopper class).

USACE's recommended option in the report would schedule the *Essayons* for 215 days of annual dredging, schedule the *Yaquina* for 178 days, keep the *Wheeler* in ready reserve and retire the *McFarland*. The option will result in a \$10.1 million net reduction in the total cost for hopper dredging and will offer approximately 55 days of additional work to industry annually. It also ensures the Corps has a viable reserve capability ready to respond to unforeseen requirements, and ensures that federal projects requiring hopper dredging can be accomplished in a timely manner and at reasonable cost.

The recommended option is one of 12 considered by the Corps that ranged from making no changes to the fleet's current configuration and operation to retiring all four hopper dredges.

"The recommendations contained in The Hopper Dredge Report to Congress represent the best business case that the Corps can make for the future service to the nation of its hopper dredge fleet," said Maj. Gen. Don T. Riley, USACE's Director of Civil Works.

"We believe this report strikes the right balance between the continued capabilities and utilization of the Corps' minimum fleet and the capacity of our industry partners who maintain the nation's commercial hopper dredges," added Riley.

The *McFarland* is the oldest dredge in the fleet and operates at a daily rate that substantially exceeds comparable industry medium-class hopper dredges. Retiring the *McFarland* will affect approximately 75 Philadelphia District full-time employees. The *McFarland* would require approximately \$20 million in rehabilitation and repowering if it were to be kept in the minimum fleet. The Corps proposes a timeline of two years for retirement of the *McFarland* if Congress accepts the recommendations in the report.

USACE prepared The Hopper Dredge Report to Congress to meet a requirement of the Conference Report for the 2004 Energy and Water Appropriations Act. The Conference Report directed the Corps to report to the Energy and Water Appropriations committees with a detailed plan of how the Corps planned to correct issues raised in the March 2003 GAO report entitled "Effects of Restrictions on Corps' Hopper Dredges Should be Comprehensively Analyzed."

Congress will make the final decision on the recommendations in the report. Any changes to the makeup and configuration of the minimum hopper dredge fleet will require legislative action.